

# Discover San Diego County's Natural Treasures



## Our Open Space Preserves

County of San Diego  
Department of Parks and Recreation

# San Diego’s Open Space Preserves

We live in a land of natural treasures in San Diego. To begin with, there is more diversity of plant and animal life here than in almost any other area in the nation. The habitats in which those plants and animals live are likewise diverse. Our Mediterranean climate, which is shared by only four other places on earth, allows us to enjoy those habitats and



their residents year round. And the best news for this and future generations is that all of these treasures can be found in San Diego County Open Space Preserves.

So what’s the best way to enjoy these natural areas? Take your pick—our open-space preserves have something for everybody. For example, people who are interested in an easy hike might want to stroll along the streamside trail at Blue Sky Reserve. More adventurous trekkers will be challenged by the hills of El Capitan or Hellhole Canyon. Equestrians will find miles of trails to explore at Los

Peñasquitos or Mt. Gower. Do you like flowers? At the right time of year, wildflowers carpet the hillsides at Volcan Mountain or Sycamore Canyon. How about birds? Bird-watchers from across the country gather in Tijuana River Valley Regional Park or San Elijo Lagoon Reserve to experience spectacular spring and fall migrations.

## Managing these parks

A delicate balance exists between providing public access to these open space areas and protecting the resources. Although approximately 2,400 acres of County parkland are developed as traditional parks with campsites, picnic tables, and playgrounds, almost 33,000 acres are maintained as vari-

ous types of open space, including urban canyons, river courses, mountains, and meadows. Establishing hiking trails is one way of providing public access to these lands. Parks Department crews have created approximately 100 miles of hiking and equestrian trails in open space preserves—one of the most extensive public trail systems in Southern California.

## Managing these diverse lands is a complex process

- Because open space preserves are home to many rare plants and animals, the Parks Department conducts biological assessments in each preserve. Certain parklands have been included in the Multiple Species Conservation

Park	Days	Hours	Rest-rooms	Water	Type of Use	Miles of Trails	Trail Difficulty	Camping
Blue Sky Ecological Reserve	7	8 a.m.–Sunset	Y	N	H,E,W	3	E	N
El Capitan Preserve	7	8 a.m.–Sunset	Y	N	H,B,E,W	10	D	N
Goodan Ranch Preserve	7	8 a.m.–Sunset	N	N	H,B,E,W	7	E	N
Hellhole Canyon Preserve	7	Daylight	Y	Y	H,E,W	8	M–D	Y <sup>1</sup>
Lakeside Preserve	7	Daylight	N	N	H,E,W	2	M	N
Los Peñasquitos Canyon	7	8 a.m.–Sunset	Y	Y	H,B,E,W	2.5+	M	N
Mount Gower Preserve	7	Daylight	Y	Y	H,E,W	8	M–D	Y <sup>1</sup>
Mount Olympus Preserve	7	Daylight	N	N	H,W	5	M–D	N
Oakosasis Preserve	7	8 a.m.–Sunset	N	N	H,E,W	4	E–M	Y <sup>2</sup>
San Elijo Lagoon Reserve	7	Daylight	Y	Y	H,E,W	6	E	N
Santa Margarita River	7	7 a.m.–Sunset	N	N	H,E,W	1.5	E–M	N
Simon Preserve	7	Daylight	N	N	H,E,W	5	D	N
South Bay Biological Study Area	7	Daylight	N	N	W	—	—	N
Sycamore Canyon Preserve	Sat.–Sun.	8 a.m.–5 p.m.	N	N	H,B,E,W	5	M–D	N
Tijuana River Valley Regional Park	7	Daylight	Y	Y	H,E,W	5	E	N
Volcan Mountain Preserve	7	Daylight	N	N	H,W	3	M	N
Wilderness Gardens Preserve	Thurs.–Mon.	8 a.m.–4 p.m.	Y	N	H,W	5.5	E–M	N

Type of Use:  
H = Hiking  
B = Biking  
E = Equestrian  
W = Nature Watching

Trail Difficulty:  
E = Easy  
M = Moderate  
D = Difficult

<sup>1</sup> Primitive–reservation required  
<sup>2</sup> Group camping by reservation only

Program, which will set aside 172,000 acres to protect 85 endangered species and ensure the survival of the natural beauty of the San Diego region.

- Many cultural resources, such as archaeological and historic sites, are found in open space preserves. Protecting these irreplaceable resources is one of the Department's duties as steward of our rich heritage.
- So that future generations appreciate and respect the natural treasures they inherit from us, the Department of Parks and Recreation places particular emphasis on education. Programs designed for children include workshops, interpretive activities, hikes, and school camps.

This brief look at the open space preserves of San Diego County can only offer a sample of what you'll find to see and do. Look at the accompanying chart and map for more details. But the best thing to do is to come to a



County Open Space Preserve to see first hand the wonder of San Diego's wilderness areas. Come discover our natural treasures for a lifetime of enjoyment.



For more information  
on your local County parks or  
open space preserves,  
please call

**(858) 694-3049**

or write to:



**County of San Diego  
Department of Parks and Recreation**

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